

PBS MACNEIL-LEHRER REPORT
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ALLAN RYAN JR. (Justice Department): It is a principle of democracy and the rule of law that justice delayed is justice denied. If we are to be true to that principle, and we ought to be true to it, we cannot pretend that it applies only within our borders and nowhere else. We have delayed justice in Lyon.

MACNEIL: Good evening. Thirty-eight years after the end of World War II, the United States formally admitted today that its agents helped alleged Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie escape prosecution. Barbie was the wartime head of the Gestapo in the French city of Lyon and was wanted by the French on charges of mass murder and other crimes. In a report of more than 200 pages released today, the Justice Department said officers of the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corps engaged in obstruction of justice by concealing Barbie from U.S. civilian authorities. It called the actions incomprehensible and shameful. The report said the intelligence corps recruited Barbie as a spy against the Soviets, unaware that he was wanted as a war criminal but later helped him to escape to South America. The Reagan administration confirmed late today that it has apologized to the French government. Tonight, the Barbie case with the man who conducted the Justice Department investigation, the man who ran a counterintelligence unit in Germany when Barbie was in U.S. control and an American Jewish leader unsatisfied by the government's investigation. Jim?

LEHRER: Robin, there are both general and specific charges against Klaus Barbie, the so-called Butcher of Lyon. The sweeping one is that he had a direct hand in the deaths of more than 4,000 French Jews and members of the French resistance, and that as head of the Gestapo in Lyon, France, from 1942 to '44 he sent 7,000 more persons, mostly Jews, to concentration camps. The specifics include locking 100 teen-agers in their school and then burning and dynamiting it, personally torturing prisoners, some to death, with kicks, beatings and ice water, ordering hundreds of Jews onto trains and then refusing them food or water--thus, intentionally killing them all. In the confusion after the war, Barbie escaped France to Germany, where, according to today's Justice Department report, he worked for American intelligence, providing information on the Soviet Union and on communists in Germany. In 1951, with the heat on from France to find Barbie and prosecute him for his Lyon crimes, U.S. agents helped him escape through Austria to Genoa, Italy, then on a ship to South America. For the next 31 years he lived mostly in Bolivia as Klaus Altman, a businessman. He was found and identified by the French and others 12 years ago, but it wasn't until last year that a new Democratic government in Bolivia arrested him and expelled him to France, where now, 69 years old, he awaits trial for what he is accused of doing in Lyon 40 years ago. The Justice Department investigation of U.S. involvement in the Barbie affair began last March under the direction of Allan Ryan Jr., director of the Justice Department Office of Special Investigations, who issued today's report. Mr. Ryan, let's go through your basic conclusions first. And you believe that the use of Barbie by U.S. intelligence officers as an agent right after the war was justified, or at least defensible, and understandable. RYAN: I think it was defensible, and I wanna correct something that was, ah, Robin said a few minutes ago. I did not call that incomprehensible and shameful. I said some people would find it incomprehensible and shameful. Others would find it a very necessary response to the forces that were, ah, at work in Germany after the war. My own conclusion is that, ah, the Army officers, in 1947 when Barbie was recruited, were not aware that he was wanted by the French on war crimes charges. They were not aware of the charges that were listed a moment ago.

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